

# THE URBAN MYTH

VISIONS OF THE CITY



# THE URBAN MYTH: VISIONS OF THE CITY

According to the Earth Institute at Columbia University, for the first time in history, the population of the world living in urban areas will soon outnumber those living in rural areas. This exhibition seeks to trace the artist's experience of the City's rise to dominance in the Western landscape.

Beginning in the early eighteenth century, artists like Canaletto began making *vedute* (view paintings) to sell to European tourists taking the Grand Tour. These paintings celebrated the achievements of Western Civilization by highlighting the sophistication of its architecture and the grace of its public squares. The patterns and linear geometry of the environment were meticulously recorded, but gave way to architectural fantasies as the aesthetic potential of the urban landscape became more apparent.

Without native cities of Roman or Venetian stature to paint, American artists interested in rendering the urban scene were forced to travel abroad. Of these, James Abbott McNeill Whistler and John Singer Sargent were the most successful with their own romanticized portrayals of Venice. As New York, Chicago, and San Francisco grew larger in the world's imagination, however, painters like Childe Hassam and Colin Campbell Cooper began to register their marvels in paint. Their views of the city were faithful to the romantic tradition in urban painting, but they added a new sense of excitement. Indeed, American architecture had an exciting new icon - the skyscraper. Cooper saw these new wonders of engineering as analogs to the cathedrals of Europe, and made each a shimmering monument to American ingenuity.

As the twentieth century got under way, the American city became a symbol of modernity. Powered by coal and fed by locomotives and trucks, the City grew a new skin of steel, concrete, and glass. It twinkled at night with the aid of electric power, while big city parks defined a new experience of nature for millions of people. The technologies of the industrial revolution seemed to offer limitless possibilities.

Of course, the city brought its own problems. In 1908, a group of eight talented descendents of the Realist school mounted an exhibition of paintings depicting the urban poor. Derisively termed, "the Ashcan School" by a local critic, these artists defined a new vision of the city as gritty and anonymous. Their paintings captured the hurried pace of life in New York and the claustrophobia of living in the narrow trenches between towering buildings. The atmosphere captured in these early paintings seemed dark and even toxic, but the tone of the paintings was not. Instead, they seemed to enoble the common struggle to make it through each day. Led by Robert Henri and John Sloan, these artists proved extremely influential as teachers of the next generation.

In 1913, the International Exhibition of Modern Art went on view at the Armory in New York before traveling to Chicago. American artists were suddenly challenged by the new visual languages of Cubism and Futurism. Angular, dynamic, abstracted, and assembled in the intellect, these styles triggered a seismic shift in American art. Artists like Charles Sheeler and Charles Demuth began to formulate an American response in a new Precisionist body of work. Their paintings were bright, futuristic and exactly painted. The patterns of



COLIN CAMPBELL COOPER (1856-1937)  
The Train Roundhouse, Salem, Massachusetts, c. 1910  
20 x 25.5 inches | oil on canvas

windows and the ubiquity of rectangular forms divided by triangles of light became part of the vernacular of modern painting. Meanwhile, avant-garde artists like John Marin managed to capture the energy and flux of metropolitan life in Cubist inspired compositions.

Through the Depression and the end of the World War Two, artists continued to record the cities in which they lived using these ideas as a foundation.

Contemporary artists seem to have reignited the fascination with the urban scene. Some are drawn to cities for the larger markets or the mixture of ideas, while

for others, it is the formal quality of the environment that beckons. For many, the City retains the aura of romance. Cultural hybridity, cutting-edge technology, and the sensory feast of the downtown nightlife are also treated regularly.

In this new century, a sense of urban forms breaking apart seems apparent in the works of Wayne McCall, Audrey Sanders, Matty Byloos, and Barry Berkus. As destruction precedes creation, the questions beg asking: what will the cities of tomorrow look like and how will our artists record them?

- Jeremy Tessmer, Gallery Director

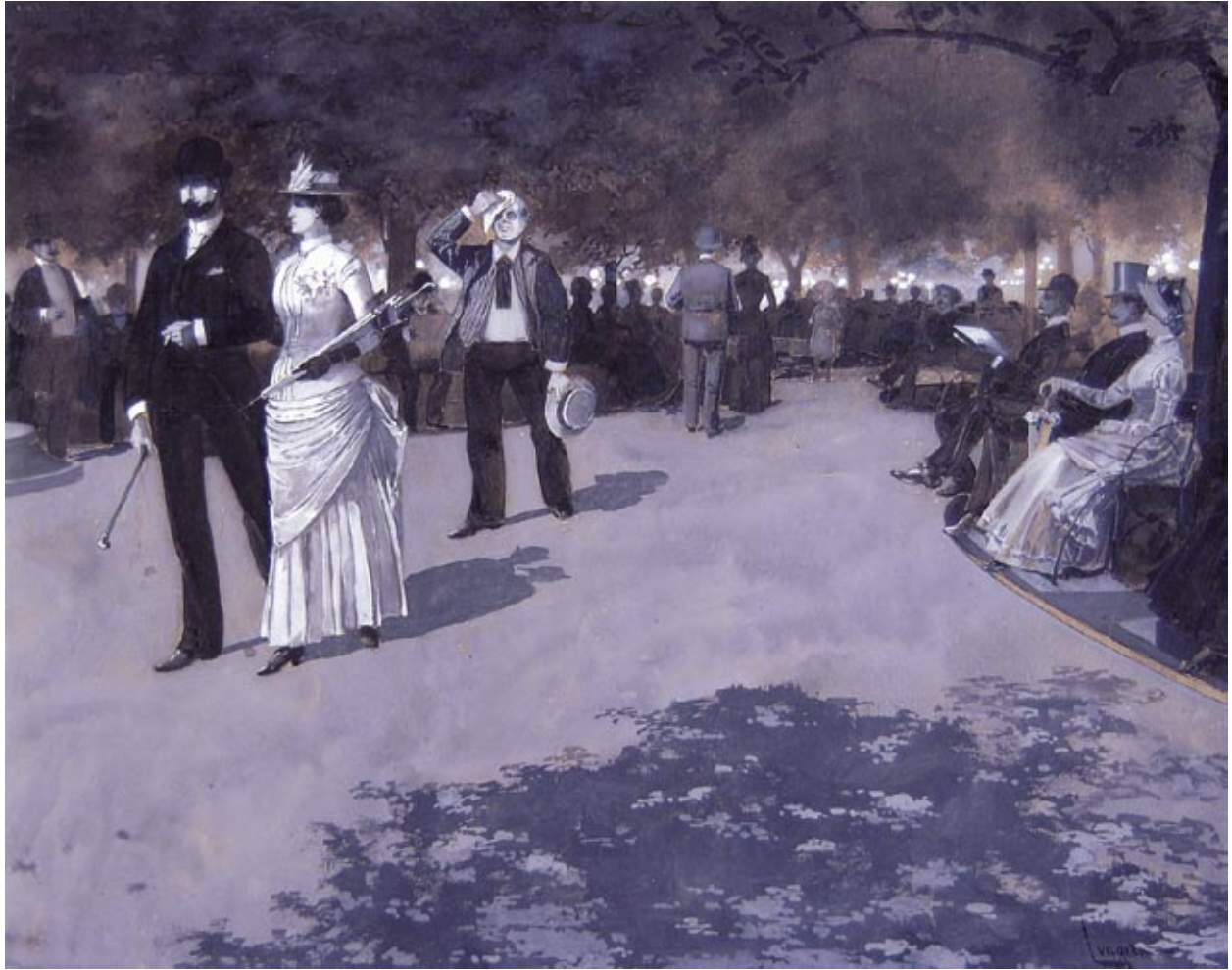


**LEFT TOP:**  
BRIAN REYNOLDS  
Duomo San Martino, 2006  
10 x 8 inches | oil on panel

**LEFT BOTTOM:**  
Segovia Cathedral, ND  
14 X 21 inches | watercolor on paper

**RIGHT:**  
FERNAND LUNGREN (1857-1932)  
Central Park Promenade, 1888  
16 x 20 inches | gouache on board (grisaille)







**LEFT TOP:**  
BEN SHAHN (1898-1969)  
Interior, Man by Stove, c. 1930  
12 x 16 inches | oil on canvasboard

**LEFT BOTTOM:**  
BO BARTLETT  
Santa Barbara Greyhound Station, 2005  
15 X 22.5 inches | gouache on paper

**RIGHT:**  
JACK SMITH  
Lauren, 2007  
5.25 x 6 inches | black oil on copper







**LEFT TOP:**  
BETTY LANE (1907-1996)  
Houston Street, 1951  
9.5 x 13.5 inches | watercolor on paper

**LEFT BOTTOM:**  
DOROTHY SKLAR (1906-1996)  
The Great Lover, 1944  
12 x 18 inches | watercolor on paper

**RIGHT:**  
ANDERS ALDRIN (1889-1970)  
Two Shoppers, 1933  
32 x 34 inches | oil on canvas





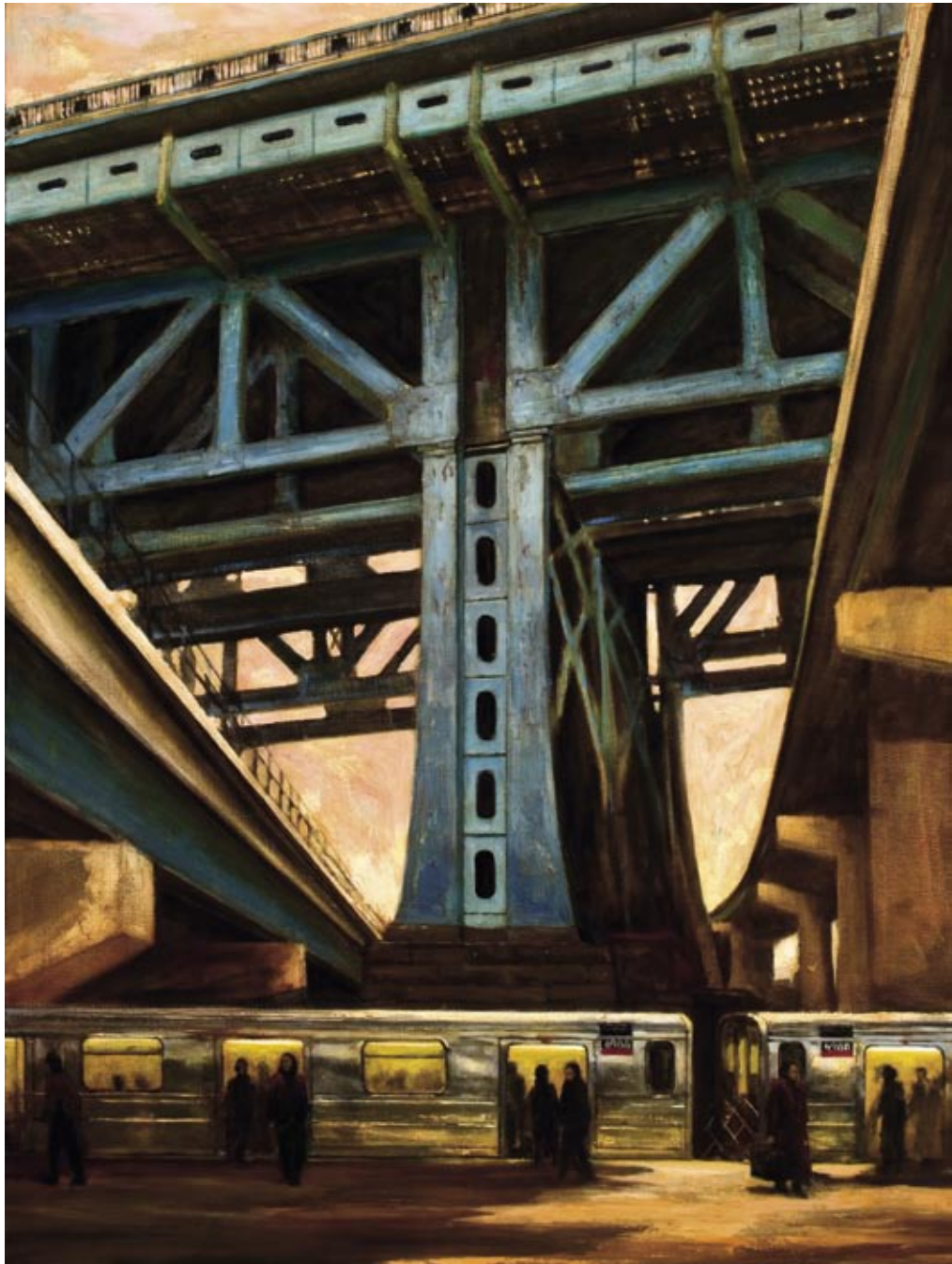


**LEFT TOP:**  
JON FRANCIS  
Up Market, 2007  
20 x 24 inches | oil on canvas

**LEFT BOTTOM:**  
PATRICIA CHIDLAW  
High Spirits, 2007  
12 x 16 inches | oil on canvas

**RIGHT:**  
DAVID P. COOKE  
The Blue Bridge II, 2006  
48 x 36 inches | oil on panel







**LEFT TOP:**  
JULIA HENSLEY  
SF Gold Sidewalk, 2004  
16.5 x 14 inches | oil on masonite

**LEFT BOTTOM:**  
DAVID JONASON  
Heading East, 2007  
18 x 40 inches | oil on canvas

**RIGHT TOP:**  
NICOLE STRASBURG  
New York, 2007  
12 x 60 inches | oil on birch panel

**RIGHT BOTTOM:**  
PETER RUTA  
New York Waterfront, 1981  
48 x 66 inches | oil on canvas







LEFT :

WAYNE McCALL

Irrational Embrace of Myth, 2007  
44 x 32 inches | ultrachrome print

RIGHT :

MATTY BYLOOS

Cube Houses, Rotterdam: Remembered, 2007  
48 x 82 inches | mixed media on panel

## ARTISTS INCLUDED

ANDERS ALDRIN  
BO BARTLETT  
BARRY BERKUS  
JOHN BERNHARDT  
MATTY BYLOOS  
PATRICIA CHIDLAW  
COLIN CAMPBELL COOPER  
JOELLYN DUESBERRY  
ALIA EL-BERMANI  
IRMA CAVAT  
FRANK TOLLES CHAMBERLIN  
EDGAR EWING  
JON FRANCIS  
STANLEY GOLDSTEIN  
ROBIN GOWEN  
JULIA HENSLEY  
DAVID JONASON  
WAYNE LACOM  
BETTY LANE  
FERNAND LUNGREN  
DAN LUTZ  
JOHN MARIN  
WAYNE McCALL  
BEN MESSICK  
R. KENTON NELSON  
BRIAN REYNOLDS  
FREDERICK REMAHL  
PETER RUTA  
AUDREY SANDERS  
JULIUS SCHULMAN  
JOE SCHWARTZ  
BEN SHAHN  
NICOLE STRASBURG  
NICHOLAS TAKIS  
JAMES DAVID THOMAS  
CLAUDE VENARD  
SHIBA WARD



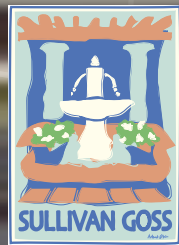
ON EXHIBIT

AUGUST 11 - OCTOBER 7, 2007

RECEPTION FOR THE ARTISTS

SATURDAY, AUGUST 11, 2007 | FROM 5 - 7PM

7 EAST ANAPAMU STREET | SANTA BARBARA, CA



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